AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) Device for hot dip coating a metal strand (1), said device comprising: ~~especially a steel strip, in which the metal strand (1) is passed vertically through~~ a coating tank (3) that contains the molten coating metal (2) and ~~through~~ a guide channel (4), wherein the guide channel (4) is arranged upstream, relative to the direction of travel of a metal strand (1), of the coating tank (3) such that the strand (1) is passed vertically through the guide channel (4) and then through the coating tank (3), and wherein the guide channel (4) is comprised of ~~upstream of the coating tank (3), with~~ at least two inductors (5) for inducing an electromagnetic field, which are installed on both sides of the metal strand (1) in the area of the guide channel (4) in order to keep the coating metal (2) in the coating tank (3), wherein distance (d) between the walls (6) that bound the guide channel (4) is not constant in the direction (N) normal to the surface of the metal strand (1) in the region (H) of the vertical extent of the guide channel (4)

between the lower end (7) of the guide channel (4) and the bottom (8) of the coating tank (3), such that the walls (6) that bound the guide channel (4) have a constriction (10) or an expansion (11).

2. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the cross section of the constriction (10) or the expansion (11) has essentially the form of a circular segment.

3. (Currently amended) Device in accordance with Claim 1, wherein at least one flow deflection element (12, 12', 12", 13, 13') is arranged in the coating tank (3) and~~/or~~ in the guide channel (4).

4. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 3, wherein the flow deflection element (12, 12', 12", 13, 13') is designed as a flat, narrow plate, whose longitudinal axis (14) extends in the direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance (R) of the metal strand (1) and perpendicular to the direction (N) normal to the surface of the metal strand (1).

5. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 3, wherein the one or more flow deflection elements (13, 13') are arranged in the guide channel (4) in the region of the expansion (11).

6. (Currently amended) Device in accordance with Claim 3 [[1]], wherein at least one bath relaxation plate (16) is arranged in the coating tank (3) near the surface (15) of the coating metal (2).

7. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 6, wherein the position of the bath relaxation plate (16) can be vertically adjusted by an actuator (17).

8. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 6, wherein the bath relaxation plate (16) consists of ceramic material.

9. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 8, wherein the flow deflection element (12, 12', 12", 13, 13') is designed as a flat, narrow plate, whose longitudinal axis (14) extends in the direction perpendicular to the direction of conveyance (R) of the metal strand (1) and perpendicular to the direction (N) normal to the surface of the metal strand (1).

10. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 8, wherein the one or more flow deflection elements (13, 13') are

arranged in the guide channel (4) in the region of the expansion (11).

11. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 1, wherein at least one bath relaxation plate (16) is arranged in the coating tank (3) near the surface (15) of the coating metal (2).

12. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the position of the bath relaxation plate (16) can be vertically adjusted by an actuator (17).

13. (Previously presented) Device in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the bath relaxation plate (16) consists of ceramic material.